

Film Feature: The 10 Most Anticipated Films of Summer 2012

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 25, 2012 - 8:38am

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CHICAGO – Could this summer movie season possibly top the last one creatively? Going into Summer 2011, most people were nervous... and with good reason, as there appeared to be far more potential creative and commercial disasters than normal. And then movie after movie surprised us all, from major hits to minor joys. Will Summer 2012 provide the same rollercoaster of thrills?

Summer 2011 will go down as one of the most purely entertaining in film history. Sure, kids movies fell COMPLETELY flat (the less said about “Cars 2,” “The Smurfs,” and “Zookeeper” the better) and there was some big-budget junk, but there were a surprising number of blockbusters that reminded us why we fell in love with the Summer tentpole movie in the first place, films like “Super 8,” “Rise of the Planet of the Apes,” and “X-Men: First Class.” And those big-budget hits were mixed in with a nice selection of critical darlings and future Best Picture nominees like “The Tree of Life” and “Midnight in Paris.” It was a great season.

Will Summer 2012 match it? Maybe. The fact is, like last year, there are a lot of question marks. For every potential franchise-starter or hit sequel, there’s something that looks like a creatively bankrupt cash grab. And then there are the movies that are virtually impossible to predict. Will “Total Recall” be fun or trash? Will the talking teddy bear in “Ted” wear out his welcome before the hour mark? How will the animated films compare? They have to be better than last year, right? And what of the trio of big-ticket superhero movies? If you thought last year’s caped quartet was a big deal, this is EASILY the biggest summer yet when it comes to films based on comic books. The three tentpoles will almost certainly be the top three films of the season at the box office, but will they deliver creatively? I’m optimistic. They’re all in my top ten. Read on and find out where they rank and see the rest of the diverse array of characters that join Spidey, Batman, and Iron Man on our top picks for the season.

Runner-Ups: “360,” “Beasts of the Southern Wild,” “The Campaign.” “ParaNorman,” “Rock of Ages,” “Ruby Sparks,” “Savages,” “Seeking a Friend for the End of the World,” “Ted,” and “To Rome with Love”

10. “Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter”



Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter

Photo credit: Fox

Release Date: June 22nd

Starring: Benjamin Walker, Mary Elizabeth Winstead, Alan Tudyk, Dominic Cooper, Rufus Sewell, and Anthony Mackie

Written by: Seth Grahame-Smith and Simon Kinberg

Directed by: Timur Bekmambetov

Plot: Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States, discovers that vampires are planning to take over the United States. He makes it his mission to eliminate them with his stove-pipe hat and rail-splitting axe.

Why It Should Rule: The director of one of the most ridiculous action movies of the last decade (“Wanted”) taking on the super-ridiculous concept of Civil War-era vampires. It has the potential to be a high-budget B-movie of the highest caliber and to give the summer a jolt of goofy fun that doesn’t come with secret identities and sidekicks. I had “Rise of the Planet of the Apes” in this spot last year under the suspicion it could be the best B-movie of the season. Hope I’m right again this year.

Why It Might Suck: Oh, the potential for suck (no pun intended) is deadly. This could just as easily be “Jonah Hex.” And then I’ll deny I ever looked forward to it. Watch me.

9. “Moonrise Kingdom”



Moonrise Kingdom
Photo credit: Focus

Release Date: May 25th

Starring: Bruce Willis, Edward Norton, Bill Murray, Tilda Swinton, Harvey Keitel, Frances McDormand, and Jason Schwartzman

Written by: Wes Anderson & Roman Coppola

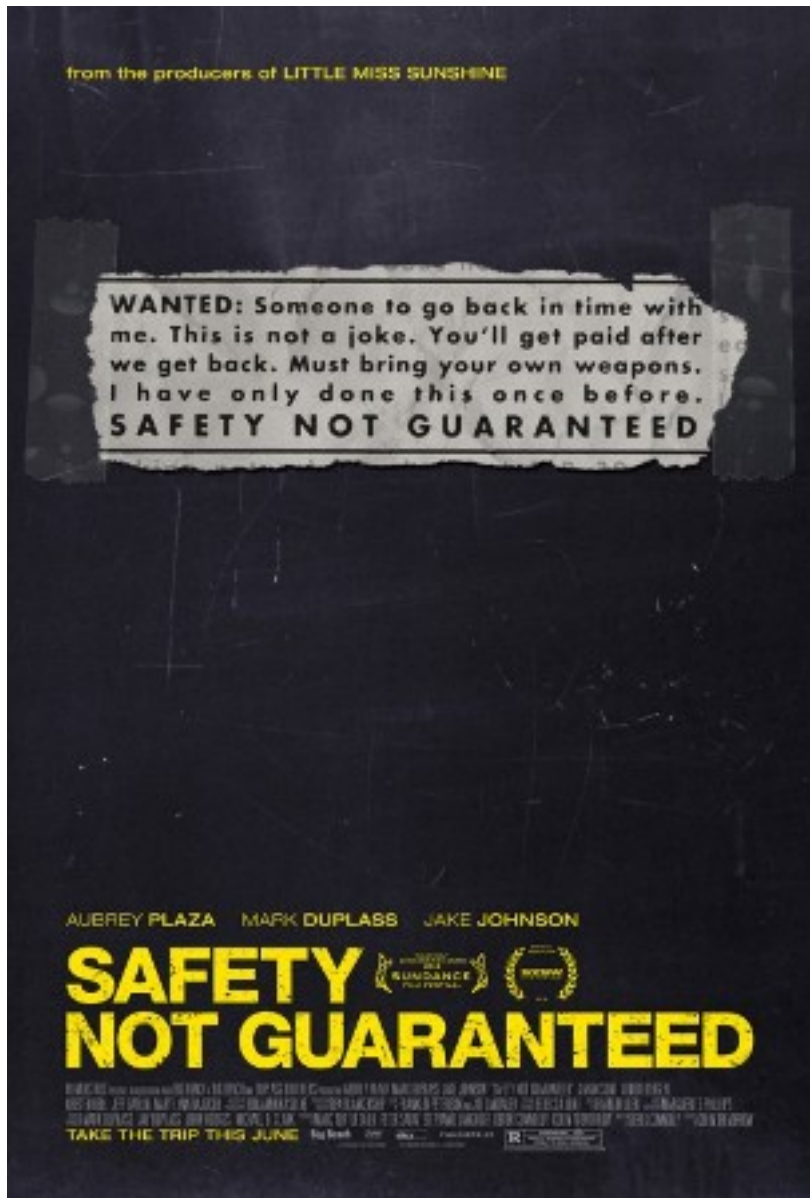
Directed by: Wes Anderson

Plot: A pair of adolescent lovers flee their New England town, which causes an eccentric local search party to fan out and find them.

Why It Should Rule: Because the preview is spectacular. It looks like Anderson could be bringing the wit and whimsy that he seemed to relocate with “The Fantastic Mr. Fox” and doing so with a spectacular cast. The movie looks charming, cute, gorgeous, and fun. In fact, it would probably top this list if...

Why It Might Suck: ...I hadn't been burned a few too many times to still love Wes. Don't get me wrong — “Rushmore” is one of my favorite movies of all time and “The Royal Tenenbaums” is fantastic. But you can keep “The Life Aquatic” and “The Darjeeling Limited.” Will “Moonrise Kingdom” be a return to form or more of the pretentious same?

8. “Safety Not Guaranteed”



Safety Not Guaranteed

Photo credit: Film District

Release Date: June 8th

Starring: Aubrey Plaza, Mark Duplass, Jake M. Johnson, Mary Lynn Rajs kub, and Jeff Garlin

Written by: Derek Connolly

Directed by: Colin Trevorrow

Plot: Three magazine employees head out on an assignment to interview a guy who placed a classified ad seeking a companion for time travel.

Why It Should Rule: Once again, a strong preview helps sell this very clever concept that has the potential to elevate some of my favorite indie comedy and TV actors to a new level of fame — fans of “Parks and Recreation,” “The League,” and “New Girl” probably already love Aubrey Plaza, Mark Duplass, and Jake M. Johnson, but the preview makes it look like they’re finally being given the right film platform. This could be the “Terri” or “Cyrus” of the summer season — a quirky indie comedy that really connects.

Why It Might Suck: Or it could just be one of many that probably won’t. Duplass has long seemed to be a more interesting writer than actor and can Plaza carry a movie? We’ll see.

7. “The Amazing Spider-Man”



The Amazing Spider-Man

Photo credit: Sony

Release Date: July 3rd

Starring: Andrew Garfield, Emma Stone, Martin Sheen, Rhys Ifans, Embeth Davidtz, C. Thomas Howell, Sally Field, Denis Leary, and Campbell Scott

Written by: Alvin Sargent and Steve Kloves

Directed by: Marc Webb

Plot: Peter Parker finds a clue that might help him understand why his parents disappeared when he was young. His path puts him on a collision course with Dr. Curt Connors, his father's former partner, and a certain radioactive spider.

Why It Should Rule: A great cast, a great writer (Kloves did most of the “Harry Potter” adaptations), and an interesting director. I think the footage we’ve seen so far, especially the P.O.V. web swing, has been stronger than expected and, while there’s clearly reason to be nervous, I think we’re learning that directors are important to superhero movies — Sam Raimi, Christopher Nolan, Matthew Vaughn. Marc Webb is talented enough to join that list of comic auteurs.

Why It Might Suck: It’s too soon. It’s going to be impossible not to directly compare to what Raimi and Maguire did and, while it will probably be easy to critically surpass “Spider-Man 3,” what happens when it fails in comparison to “Spider-Man 2”? Will we let that slide?

6. “Take This Waltz”



Take This Waltz

Photo credit: Magnolia Pictures

Release Date: June 29

Starring: Seth Rogen, Michelle Williams, Sarah Silverman, and Luke Kirby

Written and directed by: Sarah Polley

Plot: A happily married woman falls for the artist who lives across the street.

Why It Should Rule: Everyone who has seen it has told me it does. Yes, I'm using insider information. Polley's follow-up to "Away From Her" has been screening at festivals for some time and, every single time it does, Twitter explodes with positive tweets. I get more and more curious about what an actor's director like Polley could bring out of Rogen and Williams, a fantastically interesting pair.

Why It Might Suck: I could program a film festival of movies that play well AT film festivals. Seriously, every year, there are a few movies that build buzz on the circuit and fall flat when exposed to the air-conditioning of the multiplex. This could be just another one.

Move on to page two for the top five...

5. "The Bourne Legacy"



The Bourne Legacy

Photo credit: Universal

Release Date: August 3rd

Starring: Jeremy Renner, Edward Norton, Rachel Weisz, Joan Allen, Donna Murphy, Oscar Isaac, Scott Glenn, Albert Finney, David Strathairn, Stacy Keach, and Corey Stoll

Written by: Tony & Dan Gilroy

Directed by: Tony Gilroy

Plot: A story centered on a new CIA operative in the universe based on Robert Ludlum's Jason Bourne novels.

Why It Should Rule: Look at that cast. And with a great writer like Gilroy behind the scenes to bring out the best in them? The potential for this to be one of the most successful reboots of all time is HIGH. In fact, if this works, we could truly be watching this franchise morph into what was always one of its greatest inspirations — the next Bond. Jeremy Renner is to Matt Damon as Roger Moore is to Sean Connery. My brain hurts thinking about that.

Why It Might Suck: Well, it's right there in the Bond analogy. What if this is a watered-down, Roger Moore version of Jason Bourne? What if, like "The Amazing Spider-Man," we're stuck comparing this to the fantastic Greengrass/Damon films? The fact is Renner and Gilroy are filling HUGE shoes in the history of action movies. The Bourne flicks feel more accomplished and influential every year. Will "Legacy" be influential in its own way or merely feel like another retread?

4. "Brave"



Brave

Photo credit: Walt Disney

Release Date: June 22nd

Starring (the voices of): Kelly Macdonald, Emma Thompson, Kevin McKidd, Julie Walters, Robbie Coltrane, Billy Connolly, John Ratzenberger, and Craig Ferguson

Written by: Brenda Chapman & Irene Mecchi

Directed by: Mark Andrews & Brenda Chapman

Plot: Determined to make her own path in life, Princess Merida defies a custom that brings chaos to her kingdom. Granted one wish, Merida must rely on her bravery and her archery skills to undo a beastly curse.

Why It Should Rule: Pixar may have stumbled last year with the dreadful “Cars 2,” but their track record is still one of the best of the last two decades. Their first original property in three years (we’ve only gotten sequels for the last two summers) should interest any movie fan. Will it be the next “Up”? There’s also reason to be excited about the fact that Pixar has taken this opportunity to provide viewers something RARELY seen in children’s entertainment — a strong female heroine. If girls really come out and get behind “Brave,” it could easily be one of the biggest movies of the year. And the fact is that every Pixar film always has the potential to be one of the best.

Why It Might Suck: The first preview didn’t wow me and the filmmakers are kind of unknown (I’d feel better if this was Stanton or Bird, for example). Honestly, that’s it. There’s a chance it won’t be “Up” at all, but a very small one that it will completely suck.

3. “The Avengers”



The Avengers
Photo credit: Sony

Release Date: May 4th

Starring: Robert Downey Jr., Chris Evans, Mark Ruffalo, Chris Hemsworth, Scarlett Johansson, Jeremy Renner, Tom Hiddleston, Clark Gregg, Cobie Smulders, Stellan Skarsgard, Samuel L. Jackson, and Gwyneth Paltrow

Written and directed by: Joss Whedon

Plot: Nick Fury of S.H.I.E.L.D. brings together a team of superhumans to form The Avengers to help save the Earth from Loki and his invading army.

Why It Should Rule: The buzz coming out of early press screenings has been absolutely deafening. And it's not just the comic-loving fish in the jumbo barrel. The trades and other publications keep trying to top each other in terms of rapturous praise. In fact, Nolan has to be a little concerned that he won't have the most critically acclaimed superhero movie of the season. What if "Avengers" and "Dark Knight Rises" aren't just the highest grossing but the BEST movies of the season? It could truly change the landscape.

Why It Might Suck: "The Incredible Hulk" wasn't good. "Captain America: The First Avenger" and "Thor" were just OK. So was "Iron Man 2." Honestly, the threshold for this to become the best movie involving its characters isn't that high. There have been several "good" movies starring some of the Avengers, but not many great ones. Will this be another fun ride that doesn't resonate beyond the credits or will it stand with classics like "Spider-Man 2"?

2. "The Dark Knight Rises"



The Dark Knight Rises

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

Release Date: July 20th

Starring: Christian Bale, Anne Hathaway, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Liam Neeson, Tom Hardy, Gary Oldman, Morgan Freeman, Marion Cotillard, Juno Temple, Michael Caine, Joey King, and Matthew Modine

Written by: Jonathan & Christopher Nolan

Directed by: Christopher Nolan

Plot: Eight years after Batman took the fall for Two Face's crimes, a new terrorist leader, Bane, overwhelms Gotham's finest, and the Dark Knight resurfaces to protect a city that brands him an enemy.

Why It Should Rule: "The Dark Knight," "Inception," "Batman Begins," "The Prestige," "Insomnia," "Memento". If you seriously have to ask why this should rule, you're probably lost on the internet again.

Why It Might Suck: We heard some negative buzz regarding the first few minutes shown at IMAX last year and the previews have not been stellar. I can't be the only one a little nervous about this one falling short of the brilliant last entry in the series, the best superhero movie ever made. I give Nolan all the benefit of the doubt or else, honestly, this wouldn't even be this high. Yes, he could match his past brilliant work. And, yes, he could deliver his version of "Spider-Man 3." He probably won't. But the risk is there. Even if you don't want to admit it.

1. "Prometheus"



Prometheus

Photo credit: Fox

Release Date: June 8th

Starring: Noomi Rapace, Michael Fassbender, Charlize Theron, Idris Elba, Guy Pearce, Logan Marshall-Green, Sean Harris, and Rafe Spall

Written by: Jon Spaihts & Damon Lindelof

Directed by: Ridley Scott

Plot: A team of explorers discover a clue to the origins of mankind on Earth, leading them on a journey to the darkest corners of the universe. There, they must fight a terrifying battle to save the future of the human race.

Why It Should Rule: I may be showing my age here a bit but I find it hard to believe that anyone can watch the previews for “Prometheus” and not instantly sign up for this ride. Especially those of us from the generation raised on the genius of “Alien” and “Blade Runner.” Not only has the advertising been amazing, but the fact is that the man who made two of the best sci-fi films of all time is returning not only to the genre but to the specific world of one of them. If you’re not psyched, you don’t like movies.

Why It Might Suck: Does he still have it? Is this the Ridley Scott of the ’70s and ’80s or the guy who made “Robin Hood”? Seriously, don’t worry. Unless those are the best-edited previews of all time, this ain’t gonna suck.

Source: All Plot synopses courtesy of [IMDB](#) [17]



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